

Some Tips for Effective Note Taking During Sermons

- **Be prepared:** **Pray** beforehand and ask the Lord to speak to you the message you need to hear from his Word. You could do this in church before the service starts, but then you may have to be conscientious about arriving early. For many people, it will be easier to do this on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.
- **Be well rested:** to take notes effectively, you have to be able to pay attention and focus. Make sure that you get to bed on time on Saturday night.
- **Purchase** some kind of notebook, rather than using loose-leaf. This will help to preserve your notes for future reference.
- **Use the theme and division:** the pastor usually provides this in the liturgy sheet. Get your notes set up before the service begins: leave some space for an introduction, write down the theme and then allot a set amount of space for each point (one or two pages).
- **Work on your listening skills.** The Greek philosopher Plutarch once said, “Learn how to listen and you will learn even from those who speak poorly.” Two key elements here: a positive attitude (this is God’s Word!) and paying attention. Be wary of daydreams and rabbit trails in your mind that lead you away from the sermon!
- **Develop a note-taking method that works for you.** Make your notes as brief as possible – don’t try to take everything down word for word. Use a system of abbreviations for words that are regularly used. For instance, in my note taking I use the Greek letter *chi* (X) for Christ, and the Greek letter *epsilon* (ε) for church, etc. You can be creative and develop your own system. Use asterisks or underlining or something similar to highlight words or concepts that you don’t understand so that you can ask the pastor or look it up yourself at home.
- **Listen for clues as to what is critically important.** Listen for and note details, facts, illustrations, explanations and applications of the main points of the sermon. Definitions of key words should be noted. Listen for and note when a numbered list of items is discussed. Further clues: when the pastor says, “Now this is really important,” or “Now it’s very important for us to notice,” and so on.
- **Review your notes.** To get the maximum benefit from your note taking, it’s important that you later review what you’ve written. You can reflect further on the sermon with the help of the items for reflection and discussion in the liturgy sheet. You can use your notes in discussions about the sermon with your family. The most important question of all: how did this sermon speak to us about Jesus Christ? Of course, you can and should also **pray** over what you have heard and noted. Did you miss something in the sermon? Early in the week, the MP3 file of the sermon is usually available on the church website.
- **Don’t be afraid to ask!** If there is something you didn’t understand in the sermon, please ask the pastor. He will be very happy to help you.